

# **Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

## **Performance Report**

Performance Results for State Fiscal Year 2015

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## **Introduction**

This report will present the accomplishments of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), a division of the Iowa Department of Education, for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2015. Accomplishments include those related to core functions identified in the IVRS SFY 2015 performance plan as well as progress toward goals in the 2015-2018 IVRS Strategic Plan. Information in this report is provided in accordance with the Accountable Government Act to improve decision-making and increase accountability to Iowa stakeholders and citizens.

Key services of the agency are essentially separated into **two major program areas**: **1.** Services that assist Iowans with disabilities to become employed in the competitive labor market or to live independently in their homes through provision of various supports. **2.** Services involving the evaluation of Iowa citizens' disabilities to determine eligibility for economic support via Social Security disability benefits.

IVRS has managed a waiting list of potentially eligible job candidates seeking vocational rehabilitation services since May, 2002 and for several years thereafter has had to balance the need for VR services against lack of funding to meet all needs identified. There is currently a larger number of individuals with disabilities applying for services than the agency has the capacity or the resources to serve. This has resulted in IVRS having to manage a waiting list with approximately 1800 individuals on the list through the past year. Individuals with significant disabilities are waiting approximately six months prior to being able to receive vocational rehabilitation services. Individuals with the most significant disabilities are moving directly into services after being determined eligible for services. The progress made in moving individuals directly into service has been facilitated through increased funding by increasing state match to draw additional federal monies, as well as key management decisions in workforce planning and policy revisions along with the ability to replace direct service employees whose positions had been vacated.

The Disability Determination Services bureau has met and exceeded the requirements set out by the Social Security Administration for accuracy and timeliness associated with determinations on disability claims. The DDS Bureau also received special recognition through the Social Security Administration's Regional Commissioner for excellence in quality, production and teaming to assist the region in processing claims. The Administrative Services Bureau and Disability Determination Services Bureau also had a cross-bureau team of individuals who worked to develop a paperless process to pay DDS medical billings. This team received the Iowa Partners in Efficiency Award in 2015 which was presented by the Iowa LEAN Consortium. The award acknowledges the achievements of particular benefit to the citizens of Iowa and the private sector, recognizing public sector employees and teams that significantly and measurably increase productivity and promote innovation to improve the delivery of public services and save money for Iowa taxpayers and businesses. The Iowa Disability Determination Services Bureau interacts with 10,622 medical providers in the State of Iowa and had already moved to a paperless system that allowed them to interact with providers electronically for both evidence retrieval and billing. The challenge for the cross bureau team was the need to develop a paperless payment process that still met State of Iowa requirements for the payment of invoices, such as original signatures, and financial auditing responsibilities.

The project required a sustained effort, beginning with a Kaizen event in August 2011 and ending with a fully-implemented new process December 2014. This new payment process created a remarkable number of efficiencies: decreasing the days to process claims and the number of steps in the process from the start of the claim through the payment of the claim, as well as reduction of staff hours required to process and audit claims. In addition, the process significantly decreased the amount of time from submission by vendors or claimants for payment to the time the claim was paid, as well as providing better information on remittance slips to vendors. The net value of this new process includes a cost savings annually of \$99,000, labor efficiencies (redeployed or freed up resources), and ultimately, customer satisfaction.

This report will provide a brief update on progress toward the IVRS strategic plan goals as well as information on performance of the three identified core functions of the agency:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living
- Economic Supports
- Agency Resource Management.

Information for the two major program areas named above will be presented using the “**Key Results Template**”. These continue to be the most crucial indicators of this agency’s success in providing services to its customers.

## **Agency Overview**

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) exists to serve individuals with disabilities under Title II and Title XVI of the federal Social Security Act and Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). IVRS serves people with disabilities by: 1) providing vocationally related assistance to achieve economic independence through competitive integrated employment; or 2) providing disability determinations that result in appropriate financial benefits per Social Security Administration guidelines. Services through the Independent Living Program may provide financial assistance to enable persons with disabilities to maintain independent functioning as long as possible within their communities and to prevent institutionalization. IVRS is an integral part of the statewide disability community and has demonstrated leadership nationally in assisting individuals with disabilities through a progressive employment process to achieve competitive integrated employment for the most significantly disabled Iowans who have never worked.

The current statements of mission and vision are included below. The Strategic Objectives are identified in the “Results” section of this report.

### **MISSION**

We provide expert, individualized services to Iowans with disabilities to achieve their independence through successful employment and economic support.

### **CORE FUNCTIONS**

Assist eligible Iowans with disabilities in obtaining, maintaining and advancing in employment through rehabilitation services individually designed to disability and employment needs. Provide specialized services to the business community to meet their workforce and workplace needs.

Determine eligibility of Iowans who apply for disability benefits administered by the federal Social Security Administration

## VISION

**Vocational Rehabilitation Services Vision:** Making a positive difference with every person, one person at a time

**Disability Determination Services Bureau Vision:** Best Decision, Every Claimant, Every Time

### Background:

IVRS is the largest division of the Department of Education and functions with considerable autonomy. The division employs over 370 people in 44 locations throughout the state. Employees work within three Bureaus and a Planning and Development Team. For vocational rehabilitation services, IVRS received \$25.5 million in federal funds and another \$6.2 million in non-federal funds; for disability determination services, IVRS received federal funds totaling approximately \$25.7 million from the Social Security Administration (no state funds).

The majority of staff persons are professionally trained rehabilitation counselors and disability examiners. Almost 98% of the counselors have Master's degrees in Counseling or a closely related field. IVRS is mandated by its federal funding agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, to employ qualified rehabilitation counselors. All disability examiners have at least a Bachelor's degree or its equivalent. In addition, DDSB has on its payroll 35 professional consultants who are licensed as physicians, clinical psychologists, or speech pathologists. Most IVRS employees are covered under collective bargaining agreements negotiated with Iowa United Professionals or the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

All employees of the Planning and Development Team, Administrative Services and Disability Determination Services bureaus work in the Des Moines area. With the exception of a few administrative personnel and the West Central area office, most of the Rehabilitation Services Bureau employees are geographically disbursed outside of Des Moines to cover all 99 counties and every high school in the state. As stewards of the public trust, IVRS maintains an efficient workforce by assigning staff to multiple locations so that every community college, regent's institution, county, community rehabilitation programs, high school and most mental health institutes have access to an IVRS staff person.

In July 2014, federal legislation was passed on the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act. (WIOA) This mandates that IVRS, IWD, Adult Education/Literacy, Dislocated Worker Program, Wagner-Peyser, and the Youth Programs work collaboratively to maximize resources and minimize duplication. IVRS has been a key partner in the Unified Planning and development of the MOU. IVRS continues to collaborate with our partner agencies to improve work effectiveness recognizing that IVRS's work in the One-Stops expands the opportunities for persons with disabilities through the technical expertise and guidance that a trained counselor with a master's degree provides in advocacy, system development, and accessibility technical assistance. This occurs through communication and avoiding duplication of services through true collaboration encouraging stronger partnerships beyond simple co-location or itinerant offices in the Iowa Workforce Development Centers, community colleges, regent's institutions and through coverage at our mental health institutions. This past year saw the continued implementation of collaborative partnerships with the Iowa Department of Aging, the Iowa Department for the Blind, the Iowa Department of Human Services and the Iowa School for the Deaf. These partnerships continue to impact persons with disabilities in these uniquely served populations and resulted in sharing of financial resources to maximize employment services focused on our common customers. Approximately \$600,000 additional federal monies came to Iowa consumers because of these partnerships.

The Rehabilitation Services Bureau (RSB) has the primary responsibility for the statewide program of quality vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible disabled Iowans through direct and purchased services from a network of providers. The focus of the RSB is training individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment and as such, works very closely with the Department of Education and Iowa Workforce Development. The Disability Determination Services Bureau (DDSB) is responsible for determining the eligibility of Iowa residents, who apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (Title II), and Supplemental Security Income (Title XVI) or the Department of Human Services Medicaid programs. DDSB makes the initial determination of eligibility and any subsequent determination of continuing eligibility and handles first-level appeals of unfavorable decisions. The Administrative Services Bureau (ASB) provides fiscal, personnel, information services and administrative support to the other Bureaus.

The Planning and Development Team (PDT) is responsible for planning, program evaluation, and outreach -- including connecting with the National Employment Network (NET), and the Employers Disability Resource Network (EDRN) and disseminating that information to the RSB concerning national development of business contacts to foster job candidate employment. There has been a deliberate attempt to increase visibility with business and industry and to integrate these services into developing a placement culture for the Rehabilitation Services Bureau Staff. This has included the opportunity to partner with businesses providing opportunities to better link job candidates with national and state employment opportunities as well as to market the value of Iowa businesses to a national audience. (See Business Outreach below for more detailed description) Specific efforts have marketed the Home Base Iowa program and improved visibility efforts for collaborative services for our veterans who have disabilities.

IVRS customers are individuals with disabilities who need vocational and other assistance to help meet their goals for employment through the RSB. The Independent Living Program, which is part of the PDT, encourages personal independence and provides assistance to individuals with disabilities so individuals may remain living in their home and community. The DDSB provides needed financial benefits due to an individual's disability(s). Vocational rehabilitation and disability determination programs are eligibility rather than entitlement programs. Applicants must meet federally determined criteria. Customers of RSB, PDT and DDSB may apply on multiple occasions during their lifetime. Customers of the vocational rehabilitation program; be they Iowans with disabilities or the business community, expect and receive professional and accurate career planning information and involvement to achieve workforce planning, placement or personal independence. DDSB claimants require accurate and timely decisions on their claims.

Competitive success is determined at the federal level by performance standards and indicators. In DDSB that translates to timeliness and accuracy of case processing; on the vocational rehabilitation side, success relates to employment outcomes and equal access to services. Under WIOA the performance standards are changing and instead the complete and comprehensive system of workforce development is being evaluated according to common measures across programs. These data elements are still being discussed and will eventually be agreed upon and integrated into a unified state plan with core partners across state systems.

In RSB, IVRS met or exceeded the Federal quantity and quality performance measures in all areas under the standards and indicators currently in effect. This was a major accomplishment and the fifth year in a row that employment outcome goals were met and exceeded.

## Strategic Challenges

IVRS was able to match all available federal funds for 2015. The lack of staff capacity and financial resources to expand capacity resulted in 1,768 applicants for vocational rehabilitation services remaining on waiting lists at the end of the year, as well as limiting the expansion of occupational skill training programs, which restricts our ability to meet the needs of our business customers. The average caseload for the state last year was 135, which is 15-20 more per caseload. When only counselors are calculated, the average increases to 166. This far exceeds the optimal caseload size of 115 - 120. This is pertinent because every case requires a counselor action since the Federal legislation mandates that only a counselor may perform core functions.

IVRS is federally (78.7%) and state (21.3%) funded so the multiplying effect of losing one state dollar due to lack of non-federal matching funds adversely impacts the delivery of rehabilitation services. Caseload size for counselors is increasing, and management continues to evaluate each position that is vacated to ensure that the core functions needed result in the proper classification hired. RSB purchases supported employment services through community providers for the most significantly disabled. The funding is coordinated with the agreement IVRS has with the Department of Human Services. This agreement ensures that both State agencies pay the same amount for services from vendors. Many of the vendors claim that this payment schedule does not meet their financial needs and may impact their ability to deliver the service in the future. Significant funding changes were developed to address these concerns and a roll-out of a new rate structure is being done January, 2016. The funding is based on hourly units instead of outcome payments and IVRS believes this will result in the vendor's being financially supported while job candidates continue to achieve outcomes. This has been a continual focus of Employment First efforts with goals relating to improved employment outcomes in competitive, integrated community settings and an alignment of resources between state departments supporting financial funding that facilitates community, integrated employment. These conversations have led to innovative discussions with the Department of Human Services regarding leveraging Medicaid Waiver monies and providing additional capacity for the Waiver. Employment First efforts, (IVRS was the lead agency in an Office of Disability Employment Policy, Department of Labor grant) led to shared funding and service delivery with the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (Department of Education, Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council) and the Disability Employment Initiative (Department of Labor). These initiatives have continued through additional funding from the Office of Disability and Employment Policy and Iowa is being recognized for its leadership in the Employment First effort. Technical assistance has been provided to over thirty community rehabilitation providers through federal subject matter experts and monthly community of practice calls have occurred focused on a variety of customized employment strategies and provider transformation strategies to assist in increasing the number of competitive community integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

The below table reflects the provider transformation efforts from the Iowa Employment First Project:

YEAR	Number of Jobs Obtained	\$/hour	Hours Worked/week	# of jobs that were Customized	# of providers reporting data
2013	14	\$7.70	14		6
2014	427	\$7.81	17.27	86	12
2015	725	\$8.31	15.93	150	18

Training for job candidates continues to be a priority area as education provides necessary academic and vocational skills to help our job candidates compete in the labor market. Ninety-six percent of our graduating students remain in the state of Iowa and 62% of our successful employment outcomes have some type of post-secondary education. There is also a close partnership with our secondary schools as we work with our youth in transition. Approximately 35% of our referrals are from our secondary schools. IVRS and the Department of Education updated the agreement between the two organizations since the passage of WIOA. This results in both agencies being mandated to perform the same/similar actions with students in transition. Therefore, this agreement collaboratively connects students with IVRS and the local education agency in a manner that achieves outcomes and capitalizes on the respective expertise of both entities. These efforts are closely aligned with the employment strategies outlined in the Skilled Iowa Initiative.

WIOA has an expectation that IVRS will support the One-Stop's services according to a fee rate, which could in the future impact the amount of available funds to support IVRS job candidates if the financial support from the State of Iowa remains static. WIOA places additional challenges and opportunities which will impact the employment services delivery system in the state in future years. These tasks will be aligned through the Iowa Unified State Plan which is currently a work in progress and is due to be submitted in March 2016. Among the areas being discussed include:

- Developing an integrated system that can be used as a common application across workforce delivery systems
- Common data collection points which can be shared and reported
- Aligned reporting systems
- Dashboard systems for communication of common data and measurements to the public
- Improved collaboration and connection with job driven systems, career credentialing and post-secondary success

In the past two fiscal years, staff time dedicated to Independent Living case services decreased. With changes in staff, the agency struggled this past year in providing full coverage for state-wide IL services. This was remedied with a hire that occurred in September of 2015 and that position will be focused on IL Service provision, decreasing the IL waiting list and meeting the core service requirements of the new federal legislation. The IL program will remain under the supervision of IVRS, but the Rehabilitation Services Administration will no longer be the federal partner. The Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act created a new federal division for oversight and partnering with the IL program and that is the Administration for Community Living within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. IVRS continues to work with our federal compliance partners to ensure compliance, particularly after audits revealed significant issues with two of the Centers for Independent Living. These have been monitored and improvements have been documented so there is hope that in 2016, IL services for these two areas will be fully funded and operating consistent with all contract requirements.

While there are no direct competitors for Disability Determination Services, there is competition for funding with other Social Security Administration entities and other states.

## **Business Outreach**

**The IVRS Business Network:** During 2015 IVRS continued to infuse business outreach activities into local and state plans resulting in strengthened business relationships statewide.

These relationships enhance the counselors' understanding of business expectations and are directly connected to the planning process with consumers. It has been found by increasing employer involvement throughout the rehabilitation process, job candidates will have better information to make informed choice decisions on their career plans. An additional result is a broader range of employment opportunities available.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to serving business and industry as a valued customer and in 2015 demonstrated this commitment through a wide range of activities and service delivery.

The Employer Disability Resource Network (EDRN) has been designed to increase the employment of persons with disabilities by pooling agency resources and providing technical expertise to employers throughout Iowa. Members of this group include staff from IVRS, the Department for the Blind, Veteran's Administration, Small Business Administration, Division of Persons with Disabilities, Workforce Development, Community Rehabilitation Providers, Drake University, and Iowa Medicaid. Persons from high school transition age to the aging population are represented. Members of this group have presented to individual employers as well as employer organizations throughout the state. At present, much attention has been raised by this group to inform employers about Section 503 Rules for Federal Contractors. Internal tools and resources have been provided to staff at IVRS to assist in educating employers about compliance with Section 503. Additionally, this group presented a conference in August, 2015, to assist in education on hiring persons from diverse backgrounds, including persons with disabilities, and the value these individuals present to the workforce. In Iowa, the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in the last decade; therefore, business and industry are considering populations that they traditionally did not pursue in hiring. With the limited number of work-ready job candidates, the conference agenda was geared toward emphasizing the benefits to employers of hiring persons with disabilities. IVRS is striving to create these connections during this economic opportunity.

Another strategy that IVRS is using with business and industry is creating partnerships that embed diversity specialists in the business. Through a service, IVRS collaborates with a business diversity specialist through sharing of service costs for IVRS eligible Job Candidates. The specialist then strives to recruit and retain individuals with disabilities in the place of employment. While only one of these arrangements currently exists, IVRS is working to expand these arrangements so that there is one diversity specialist in the geographic area of every IVRS area office. Preliminary data shows that this is a very cost-effective way to create opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In FFY 15, there were 15 placements with Unity Point, an organization that provides medical services through the various clinics and hospitals in Des Moines. The intent of this contract is for assigned staff from Unity Point (UP) to connect job candidates of IVRS with UP department managers who do the hiring to provide assistance and opportunities for placement. UP staff complete the following: advocate with the supervisor of the employers' department unit to hire IVRS work-ready job candidates; develop employment opportunities for targeted job candidates through communication and collaboration at UP with Contractor's hiring authorities; track and ensure training of IVRS job candidates who are newly hired so they become familiar with and understand the business culture of the work unit; complete a job analysis on each job an eligible IVRS job candidate is placed into; involve the IVRS counselor in the accommodation and assistive technology discussions with the hiring manager; work with the job candidate's employment supervisor to identify a mentor on the job; discuss how the job candidate is adjusting to the new job and connecting the supervisor; and place and work only with eligible and active IVRS job candidates who have been referred under the

annual contract. This provides an enhanced way to integrate the business culture into counseling and guidance and employment plan development.

IVRS area offices are also becoming involved and engaged in sector partnerships. The sector partnerships are locally developed workforce partners that serve specific industry sectors by providing a talent pool of eligible job candidates, as well as technical assistance to business and industry regarding their specific questions and needs. The Burlington Area Office has one IVRS employee on each sector partnership which has proven to be a systemic approach to placement. This allows the team to serve the business, and when a member of the team resigns or retires, a new member from the organization is then placed on the partnership. In this fashion business receives services in a continuous fashion, the relationship is built with the partnership, and there is not any gap in service delivery to the business. IVRS area offices are all working with their local workforce development partnerships to become engaged and involved, or in some instances to create these partnerships where they do not exist. IVRS can be instrumental in this development because IVRS is in every county and has personal contacts in every county. This will serve as a conduit to creating and extending sector partnerships to more rural and remote areas of the State of Iowa.

Another service provided by IVRS is the On-the-Job (OJT) Training service. IVRS met with IWD (DOL) lawyers to learn the wage and hour rules and the Fair Labor Standards Act related to OJT services in order to revamp the IVRS service to achieve a more consistent service; to ensure the program is conducted in a manner that is consistent with legal requirements; and to ensure that the program achieves the state purpose which is “participants will be compensated while learning an occupation.” The OJT service has two distinct options:

- 1. The trainee receives a stipend, but is not an employee of the company;
- 2. The trainee receives a salary, and is an employee of the company.

The expected outcome of both is that the participant learns a skill that is either transportable to another company, or is retained by the training company and achieves an employment outcome. The OJT service is typically used for those individuals for whom more intensive training on the job is needed in order to be successful.

On-the-Job Training Results:

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Successful Closures	56	86	52	52
Average Hourly Wages	\$9.56	\$9.40	\$9.40	\$9.19
Average Hours Worked Per Week	29	26	31	27

The above data demonstrates that the OJT service produces opportunities for those individuals who require different or new employment due to their disability.

IVRS is also exploring opportunities to provide STEM education to students and youth in transition to encourage interests and skill development that will lead to employment in the middle skills sectors.

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) contracts are designed to better serve individuals that IVRS is working with who are 55+ years of age. IVRS collaborated with the Iowa Department on Aging to develop a program to hire six Employment Specialists around the state by different aging resource groups to provide additional services to this population. The comprehensive statewide needs assessment completed for the last state plan had identified a need for specialized programming for this population. The State Rehabilitation Council agreed and as a result these projects were developed. These services are available on a state-wide basis for any VR job candidate age 55 or older.

IVRS counselors are working in collaboration with AAA staff to provide wrap-around services. Employment Specialists partner with the IVRS counselor to assist in identifying job goals, resources in the communities, and businesses that are open to hiring older workers.

The AAA contract started in FFY 2014 and had 90 individuals referred to the program with seven placements. Due to this being the first year of the program, the focus involved getting individuals referred to the program. So far in the current fiscal year there have been 102 referrals made to the program, an additional 22 placements, and 8 successful closures.

On October 29, 2013, IVRS invited Denise Bissonnette to provide training to staff on 30 Ways to Shine, which is a training curriculum for individuals with disabilities to learn not only job keeping skills but also skills that assist them in being noticed and prepare for advancement in the work setting. In addition staff participated in a training provided by the Association of Providers for Supported Employment and Iowa Workforce Development on job development and employer development also facilitated by Ms. Bissonnette. In FFY 14 six cases closed successfully received the “30 Ways to Shine” training, and since that time the case narrative records show that staff are using this work readiness training more extensively than the data supports. While training was provided to staff on how to record this information into the case management system, ongoing analysis, training and communication will need to be infused to assure that services provided are recorded accordingly so this curriculum can be measured and evaluated.

The Retail Employees with Disabilities Initiative (REDI) is a program through Walgreens that provides retail skills to externs or trainees with a variety of disabilities. The program works in partnership with agencies within a community to provide job coaches who can help externs gain skills and the opportunity for future employment. Participants in the REDI program are not guaranteed employment, however, the purpose of the training is to provide externs the skills and competencies required to be successful in the retail environment. IVRS works in conjunction with Walgreens stores offering the REDI, in addition to providing funding support to CRP partners who oversee job coaching and training. Externs who successfully complete the 120-hour REDI training have the opportunity to apply for openings at Walgreens or with a neighboring business. Since the initiation of REDI in 2012, IVRS has worked with six Iowa providers (CRPs) to deliver REDI training in twelve Walgreens stores across Iowa.

#### REDI Training Results:

	2012	2013	2014
Successful Closures	5	7	11
Average Hourly Wages	\$8.28	\$8.33	\$8.14

2015 REDI data is integrated into our Annual CRP Report Cards which will be distributed in the spring of the 2016. This additional time allows for a more complete set of data/outcomes.

Occupational Skill Training Programs continue to be developed and coordinated per local area office needs. We are expanding communication efforts at the local IWD Regional Workforce Boards in order to ensure collaboration with existing career pathways and sector boards that will be integrated and accessible for individuals with disabilities.

IVRS began a partnership with Manpower in 2013 to assist Iowans with disabilities gain employment. Job Candidates gain exposure to positions that could turn into a permanent hire; they have access to jobs that are most plentiful in the current economy; and they are able to tap into Manpower's expertise in attracting and placing over 5 million people globally in a variety of positions through a proven intake process that identifies the best candidate match. By partnering with Manpower, our candidates also receive 24/7 online training through Manpower Training Development Centers. This is achieved through IVRS counselors completing a passport identifying barriers to employment and accommodations needed by the job candidate in order to be successful. Manpower and VR then assist the employer in providing the necessary accommodations and training required for the job candidate to be successful and meet the business's needs.

#### Manpower Placement Results:

	2014	2015
Referrals	115	99
Successful Placements	24	28
	(20%)	(28%)

Self-Employment is a vocational option that may be considered as part of an individual's informed choice. A program for self-employment has been developed under an agreement between IVRS and Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB). It is available to active candidates of IVRS or IDB who are able to become self-sufficient by establishing, expanding, or acquiring a small business. IVRS employs two full-time business staff who specialize in assisting job candidates with a vocational goal of self-employment. Before investing time and money into a self-employment venture, the candidate must complete an in-depth study about the business they intend to start. The IVRS/IDB Counselors and the candidate, guided by the technical assistance of the IVRS Business Development Specialists, will outline a plan of action to help explore: an individual's qualifications and skills; the entrepreneurial idea; determination of the feasibility of the business idea; and facilitate Business Plan development should the idea demonstrate promise.

Iowa Economic Development, Iowa Small Business Development Centers, Iowa Job Centers and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) are organizations that can help with preliminary exploration of business ventures, and services available through Iowa Workforce Development may also provide additional education. IVRS and IDB provide the financial assistance to start a business to their respective job candidates with matching dollars provided by the job candidate. When the candidate is served by both agencies, IVRS and IDB coordinate the services and the plan. The data below demonstrates the number of successful businesses supported that remain in business two years after the opening of the business.

Self-Employment Program Summary:

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Successful Closures	39	54	38	49
Average Hourly Wages	\$11.10	\$15.75	\$13.65	\$13.74
Average Hours Worked Per Week	29	31	31	29
Active ISE job candidates as of 9/30 year-end	83	137	122	107

An additional example of business coordination occurred through the work of our State Rehabilitation Council. The Council facilitated for National Disability Awareness Month in 2015 a series of three educational webinars hosted with local collaboration/discussion occurring at three host sites. This created awareness around the business case and benefits of hiring people who have a disability. Approximately 80 people attended the session across the state, for each webinar.

Here are a few quotes from the series:

“Great job yesterday at our Business Education seminar! I enjoyed your presentation – it was absolutely aligned with our goal of delivering information to our businesses that is oriented to their success at broadening the employment pool and consequently their markets – without talking about compliance with this or that regulation.” –CEO Economic Development GCVA

“I am new to the HR world, and this information has been very helpful. Please send me more.” – HR Manager, Mason City, IA

“This helped me connect the dots on how I can help candidates and employers. Accommodations don’t have to be huge costs. They can be simple ways to make the environment work for everyone.” – Recruiter, Waterloo

**Strategic Plan:**

The IVRS strategic plan was revised in December 2014 and projected four major objectives to attain in the subsequent three (3) years; the objectives are listed below.

1. Develop and deliver customer service that addresses customer needs and requirements.

2. Develop a workforce that identifies and responds to changing workforce and workplace needs.
3. Build external collaborative relationships which contribute to improved services for lowans with disabilities.
4. Establish/maintain financial accountability/sustainability resulting in increased service outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

**Progress toward Strategic Plan objectives:**

Several staff continue to be involved in implementing actions intended to accomplish the stated objectives. Bureau Chiefs continue to have regular meetings with the Administrator regarding the strategic plan, and are accountable for supporting staff and activities within each one's bureau that contribute to accomplishment of the objectives. The Administrator met with all IVRS staff through area office visits in the fall of 2015 and one of the talking points during these visits was regarding the implementation of our Strategic Plan. The work described above were all initiated through objectives in the Strategic Plan.

The DDSB has made progress on the FY15-18 IVRS Strategic Plan goals by realigning existing human resources, reconfiguring space, enhancing fraud prevention and security measures, harnessing existing technology, and focusing on employee retention through development programs.

**Performance Plan Results**

See enclosed templates for **Key Results** and **Agency Performance Plan Results**.

## **Resource Reallocations**

Resource reallocations in IVRS relate primarily to human resources as management continues to review and adopt the most effective staffing in relation to rehabilitation service delivery. Instead of automatically filling vacant Rehabilitation Counselor jobs in the Rehabilitation Services Bureau, staffing patterns have been adopted which provide alternatives to more traditional staffing without diminishing the professional level of service required for IVRS clients.

The Rehabilitation Services Bureau has returned to having more area offices. This move was done after operating with limited management capacity only to find a significant increase in work performance issues and work behavioral issues resulting in investigations and discipline. As a result, the bureau returned to a structure of 13 area offices with a supervisor in each office. Upper management in the RSB has assumed responsibilities of other classifications as resource staff resigns or moves into other positions. This has created changes and additional job responsibilities for several management staff, but the priority was and remains how to enhance field service delivery at the job candidate direct service level. Recognizing that the RSB still requires a base number of resource positions, an administrative consultant position was reclassified to a resource manager position to create capacity and improve office performance. This will continue to be the structure in place for the foreseeable future.

The DDS has streamlined and decreased the number of lead workers and created new flexible positions that provide bureau-wide support. As compared to all other DDSB's around the nation, the Iowa Bureau has the lowest attrition rate at 2.0% (National Average is 12.5%). Maintaining excellent employee retention remains a goal.

## KEY RESULTS 1 of 2

### CORE FUNCTION

**Name:** Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living

**Description:** Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) provides a wide variety of services for persons with disabilities that lead to the attainment of their employment, independence and economic goals. Business and industry is also a customer of IVRS to whom various services are provided to help meet workplace and workforce needs. The desired outcome is competitive integrated employment that meets the needs and interests of our eligible job candidate. Services include: assessment, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental impairments, training, personal assistance services, placement, rehabilitation technology services, maintenance, transportation, small business enterprise assistance, and post-employment services. Services are planned for and delivered according to the individualized needs of the job candidate to achieve employment, and services are expanded beyond what can be obtained through a partner agency due to the unique nature and need of the job candidate.

**Why we are doing this:** Federal law was enacted after recognizing that individuals with disabilities faced severe discrimination in the workforce and required specialized assistance to achieve equal opportunity under the law. IVRS provides services to help persons with disabilities find and maintain employment, or to help them live independently (not in a group home or other care facility). This greatly enhances their quality of life and adds to the Iowa economy through reduced dependence on public support and through the payment of taxes. Our work is consistent with the Governor's stated priorities of 200,000 new jobs in Iowa, 15% reduction in the cost of government, 25% increase in family incomes, best schools in the nation.

#### **200,000 New Jobs**

In 2015, IVRS placed 2,321 Iowans with disabilities into competitive employment. Forty-six new businesses were started in 2015 and cumulatively from 2008 through 2015, 391 new businesses were started and successfully maintained through IVRS service delivery.

#### **15% Reduction in Government**

IVRS provides services to individuals with disabilities that cross many fields including partnering with the Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Iowa Department of Aging, Department of Human Services, Iowa Department of Human Rights, Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council and Iowa Workforce Development. Through the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, individuals with disabilities earned \$11.3 million more than was spent on the entire VR Program. One hundred twenty-two individuals were on public support for their living expenses and are now supporting themselves, a savings of \$955,717 annually for the state.

#### **25% Increase in Family Income**

For those successful IVRS employment outcomes, there was an increase of \$37.5 million from their application status. This is a 390% increase in their income as reported at application.

## **#1 Schools in the Nation**

Thirty-five percent of our referrals come from Iowa school districts for youth in transition. In 2015, 1,006 students were successfully rehabilitated working 34 hours a week with average earnings of \$11.57/hour. Over \$7.56 million was spent on tuition assistance for students in our post-secondary training programs to obtain educational and occupational skills training to help compete in today's labor market.

**What we're doing to achieve results:** IVRS staff includes Master's degree Rehabilitation Counselors who are strategically located throughout the state, and are supported by Rehabilitation Associates and Rehabilitation Assistants in order to provide timely and effective services. Through workforce planning IVRS created job classifications at these lower pay grades to remove required work from the counseling position that was not part of their core function, but necessary for Federal accountability. This resulted in a reduction in staffing costs since fewer counselors were hired and replaced by associates and assistants when positions were vacated. This allowed IVRS to utilize the resources more efficiently and still perform all the federally required functions.

IVRS partners with nearly 100 organizations to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services. The Iowa Rehabilitation Services System (IRSS) is being closely managed and reviewed for its operating efficiency. This plays an important role in data collection, state and federal reporting and case management.

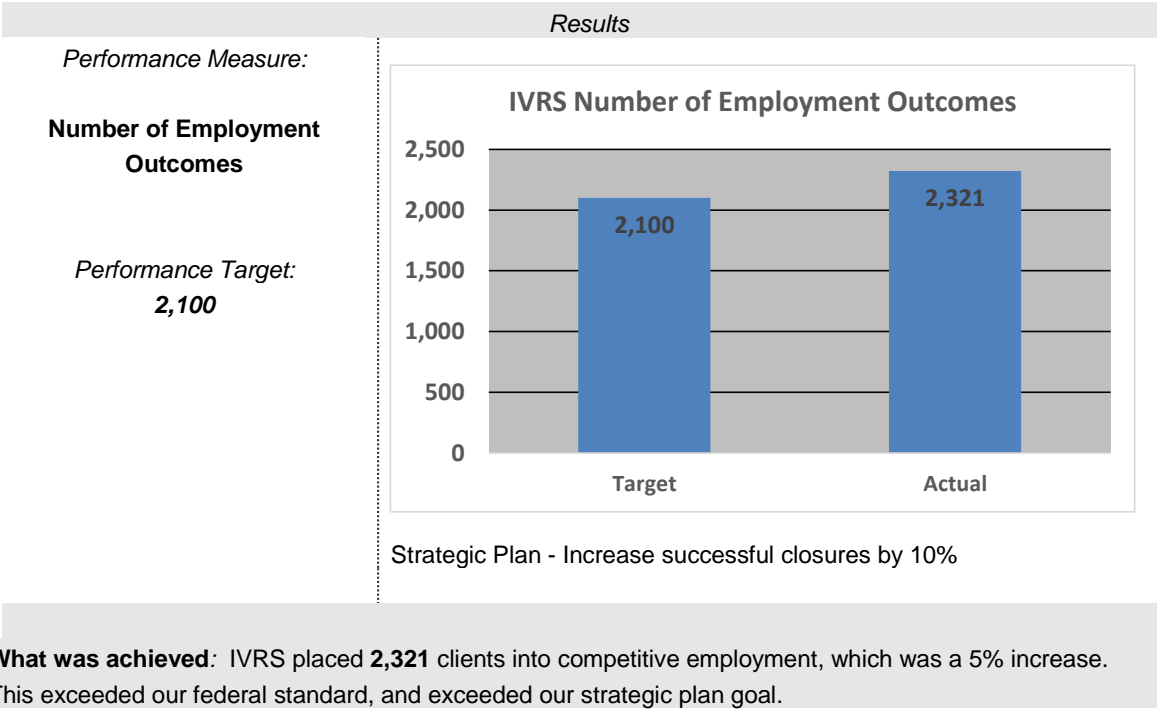
IVRS has a federal mandate to serve the most significantly disabled individuals first when resources are limited. The focus upon vocational placement and the prioritizing of core initiatives done in each area office contributes to the number of individuals placed into competitive integrated employment. Through the expertise of the counseling staff, collaboration with job candidates and other services and resources, IVRS has been increasing the number of job candidates placed in competitive integrated employment. Every employed job candidate becomes a tax payer and a consumer with more buying power thereby increasing Iowa's economy and tax-base while also saving the State's support dollars. IVRS has demonstrated a positive return on investment for state dollars that are returned to the economy serving as an economic stimulus.

IVRS also is mandated by Section 511 of the WIOA to encourage job candidates who typically only achieved employment in community rehabilitation programs at subminimum wage to explore and discover the opportunities of work competitively in an integrated employment setting. As a result, local IVRS offices have met and developed plans with local community rehabilitation program providers to have a planned approach toward placement services for their most significantly disabled population. Recognizing that the CRPs and IVRS do not have the capacity, nor does the local business community have the capacity, to place hundreds of individuals in supported employment, these plans are instrumental in achieving a successful business labor force model.

**Data Sources:** Case Service Records.

**Resources Used:** IVRS is funded with a combination of 78.7% federal funds and matched with 21.3% non-federal funds required to generate the federal funding. State appropriation for FY 15 was \$5.9 million. Total of 225.33 FTEs involved (out of authorized 242.0).

**Comment [WU1]:** Source: B7 data warehouse report.

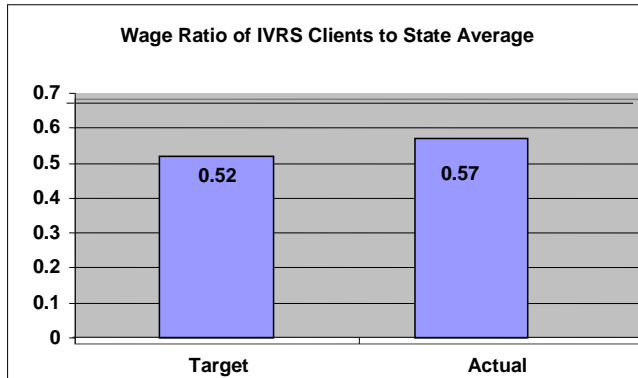


## Results

*Performance Measure:*

**Wage ratio of IVRS clients to  
state average**

*Performance Target:*  
**0.52**



**What was achieved:** IVRS exceeded the target by placing job candidates in positions paying an hourly rate of 57% of the average state hourly wage rate.

During FY 15, the average hourly earnings for a person with a disability placed into competitive employment by IVRS was \$11.72.

## KEY RESULTS 2 of 2

### CORE FUNCTION

**Name:** Disability Determination Services - Economic Supports

**Description:** The IVRS provides Disability Determination Services to claimants for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income in Iowa through a relationship with the Social Security Administration (SSA) – per federal regulations.

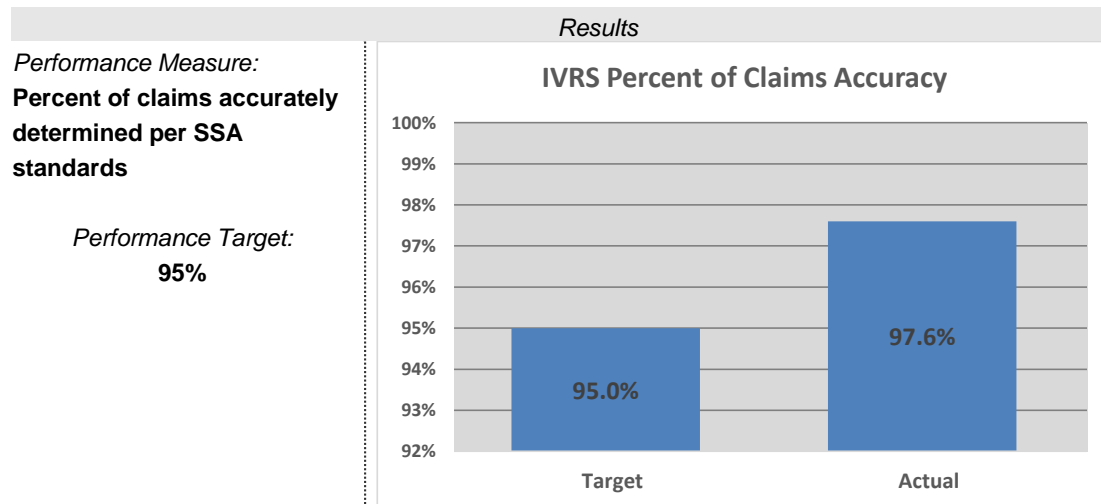
**Why we are doing this:** To enhance economic independence for disabled Iowans through cash benefits and healthier Iowans through access to Medicare and Medicaid.

**What we're doing to achieve results:** The IVRS successfully implemented a paperless process to determine claimant eligibility for social security benefits, and the new system is operating effectively. In addition, preparations are underway to implement a national Disability Case Processing System. IVRS (DDSB) implemented the use of the electronic case analysis tool which provides intelligent pathing to assist the disability examiner with decision-making. Continuing business process reviews and targeted quality reviews occur to ensure efficient and accurate service. The DDS performs continuous business process reviews to enhance service and evaluate stewardship. Technology advancements are ongoing with recent automation of internal electronic case question processes. The DDS teams with state health providers on electronic health records submission. Targeted quality reviews occur to ensure efficient and accurate service.

**Data Sources:** Social Security Administration Office of Quality Assurance and Performance Assessment

**Resources Used:** This program receives 100% federal funding of approximately \$25.7 million from the Social Security Administration. Total of 152.8 FTEs

**Comment [WU2]:** Source: 4 quarterly hours report (SSA-4514), total hours in paid status divided by 2,080.



**What was achieved:** IVRS exceeded the goal of 95% with a 97.6% accuracy rate.

## **AGENCY CONTACTS**

- David Mitchell, IVRS Administrator
- Matt Coulter, Chief, Administrative Services Bureau & Financial Officer
- Jeff Haight, Data Specialist

## AGENCY PERFORMANCE PLAN

FY 2015

(Numbers in red indicate actual result)

Name of Agency: Department of Education, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
Core Function	Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target(s)	Link to Strategic Plan Goal(s)
CF: Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Independent Living	Wage ratio of IVRS clients to state average	0.52 <span style="color: red;">.57</span>	Goal 1 To maximize every client's opportunity to reach their economic, independence and employment goals.
Desired Outcome(s):			
Full-time, or if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market.			Goal 2 Increase advocacy and support for rights of individuals with disabilities.
Services, Products, Activities	Performance Measures	Performance Target(s)	Strategies/Recommended Actions
1. Employment (Vocational Rehabilitation) Org# 0001-283-1000 0001-283-2000 0034-283-0704 0366-283-0708 0395-283-0703 0398-283-0093	A. Percent employed (federal reporting) B. Access to services ratio of minority to non-minority clients (federal reporting) C. Number of employment outcomes (federal reporting) D. Number of Self Employment clients who achieve start-up or expansion of a business	A. 55.8% <span style="color: red;">57.35</span> B. 0.80 <span style="color: red;">.839</span> C. 2100 <span style="color: red;">2321</span> D. 45 <span style="color: red;">38</span>	1. High quality client services and outcomes 2. Comprehensive system of job placement 3. Effective collaboration 4. Manage waiting lists for services
2. Independent Living (Vocational Rehabilitation) Org# 0001-283-0714	A. Percentage of persons meeting their goals B. Number of persons able to continue to live independently in their homes	A. 55% <span style="color: red;">40.7%</span> B. 100 <span style="color: red;">11*</span>	1. High quality client services and outcomes 2. Effective collaboration 3. Enhanced external communication *Staff time dedicated to Independent Living services decreased in the last two fiscal years. Also, average expenditure per client case is significantly higher compared to 5 years ago. These factors, along with limited program funds, have affected the number of clients served by IVRS in IL services.

<b>Name of Agency:</b> Department of Education, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services			
<b>Agency Mission:</b> To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.			
Core Function	Performance Measure (Outcome)	Performance Target(s)	Link to Strategic Plan Goal(s)
CF: Economic Supports	Percent of claims accurately determined per SSA standards (initial net accuracy)	95% <b>97.6 %</b>	Goal 1 To maximize every client's opportunity to reach their economic, independence and employment goals.
<b>Desired Outcome(s):</b>			
Economic independence for disabled Iowans through cash benefits, and healthier Iowans through access to Medicare and Medicaid.			
Services, Products, Activities	Performance Measures	Performance Target(s)	Strategies/Recommended Actions
3. Disability Determination: Initial review of claims and continuing disability reviews (CDR) (Economic Supports Org# 0231-283-0716 0394-283-0702 0394-283-0712 0394-283-0722 0394-283-0723	A. Initial claim processing time B. Percent of budgeted CDRs completed	A. 85 days <b>73.0</b> B. 100% <b>104.0%</b>	1. Develop quality management plan 2. Enhance training where needs are identified

Name of Agency: Department of Education, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services					
Agency Mission: To work for and with individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment, independence and economic goals.					
Core Function	Performance Measure (Outcome)		Performance Target(s)		Link to Strategic Plan Goal(s)
CF: Agency Resource Management	1.	Percent of internal customer satisfaction with key support services	1.	85% 85%	Goal 3 Increase capacity to serve all VR clients. Goal 4 Increase interest and satisfaction in VR careers.
	2.	Percent of time IT network services are available to staff	2.	95% 99%	
Desired Outcome(s):					
Resources are sufficient to provide services per IVRS mission and federal guidelines for Vocational Rehabilitation and Disability Determination.					
Services, Products, Activities	Performance Measures		Performance Target(s)		Strategies/Recommended Actions
4.Infrastructure (Resource Management) Org# 0001-283-3000 0001-283-4000	A.	Percent of required non-federal match dollars generated	A.	100% 100.0%	1. Maintain and improve sustainability model and use IRSS to forecast resource needs
	B.	Ratio of employees to supervisors	B.	12:1 14.4:1	2. Not fill supervisory positions automatically when vacancies arise.
	C.	Inspection results – Parker Building	C.	DAS responsibility now as “owner” of the Parker Building	3. Maintain contact with DAS regarding maintenance operations in Parker Building.